

Claremore Progress

Taking center stage

By Stevie St. John - Date: 2004-05-07 16:59:50

Frank Robson and his wife, Ludmila, have been talking about the need for a performing arts center in Claremore for three or four years.

"It's needed," he said. "It's needed for the school, and it's needed for the community."

And they decided to do something about it.

The Robsons are giving \$8 million toward the construction of the Claremore Performing Arts Center. They will also contribute \$3 million to an endowment fund for the maintenance of the building and the employment of a director.



The Walton Family Foundation is contributing \$3 million to the Performing Arts Center.

Robson said that with rising prices, that money might not completely fund the PAC.

"What we plan to do is build this," he said, "and we may have to call on some help from the community."

The Claremore Performing Arts Center will sit on the southeast corner of Florence and Stuart Roads, across the street from Will Rogers Junior High.

The board of directors for the PAC, a 501(c)(3) entity, includes Jerry Hastings, Mike McClaren, Rick Mosier, Linda Pollock and Frank Robson. The board will undertake getting the PAC built and, upon completion, will give it to Claremore Public Schools.

Robson hopes that it will encourage more students to get involved in the performing arts.

"It's going to be very impressive, and we're just extremely fortunate to have a benefactor," said Claremore superintendent Mike McClaren.

Claremore schools will have access to the PAC every day. It includes a band room, a choir room and a speech, drama and debate area as well as a small and a large ensemble room, a percussion area, soundproof practice rooms and rooms for uniform and instrument storage. There will also be a stagecraft area for use designing and building sets.

The facility, which will seat 1,070 people, will also be used for events.

"We're hopeful it will be a cultural center for northeast Oklahoma," McClaren said.

The PAC will be approximately 68,000 square feet. It will include an elevator and a chair lift. Robson said one consideration was providing more than sufficient restroom capacity, especially for women.

The stage will be 114 feet by 45 feet, and the auditorium is designed so that there is as close as possible to a straight sight line from each seat to the stage. A cross-aisle is meant to improve access and make it easier for teachers to supervise students.

The ceiling and side walls will be curved to reflect sound, and insulation will keep outside noises out. The orchestra pit will hold 34 people.

The PAC will also include a 50 feet by 50 feet black box theater, which is a multi-purpose unit that can be divided according to the type of event.

The black box theater will be used for small productions, accommodating crowds of up to 225. Robson said the black box theater will have the same qualities — such as acoustics — as the main auditorium.

Bids will take place in June, and Robson said that hopefully ground will be broken soon thereafter. One option under consideration is having site work and drainage done on a separate contract.

Robson said the PAC should take 14 to 18 months to complete, and it is expected to be done by early fall 2005.

“This will be a first-class facility. I can’t say how appreciative we are of the Robsons for making this gesture,” McClaren said.

Stevie St. John can be reached at trends@claremoreprogress.com.

Claremore Progress
<http://www.claremoreprogress.com>

The URL for this story is:
<http://www.claremoreprogress.com/archive/article13826>